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## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: 2016 Alaska Pinniped Research Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-AK-2016-2004624

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.439, Marine Mammal Data Program

Dates: Applications or proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m., Alaska Standard Time (AST), January 8, 2016. Applications/proposals received after the established deadline will be rejected and returned to the sender without consideration. Applications submitted through Grants.gov are automatically stamped with the date and time of submission, which will be the basis for determining timeliness. The application must be validated by Grants.gov in order to be considered timely.

PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please consider this when developing your submission timeline. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required elements have been appropriately submitted. For those not having access to the internet, one signed original and two hard copy applications must be postmarked or received at the NMFS Alaska Regional Office (AKR) by 5:00 p.m., Alaska Standard Time (AST), January 8, 2016 at the following address: NOAA Federal Program Officer for the Alaska Marine Mammal Research Program, National Marine Fisheries Service, 709 W. 9th Street, Juneau, Alaska 99801. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. (Note that late-arriving hard copy proposals provided to a delivery service on or before 5:00 p.m. AST on the closing date for applications will be accepted for review if the applicant can document that the proposal was provided to the guaranteed delivery service by the specified closing date and time and if the proposal is received by AKR no later than 5:00 p.m. AST, two business days following the closing date.)

No facsimile or electronic mail proposals will be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Marine Fisheries Service (hereinafter, "NMFS") is responsible for the stewardship, conservation, and management of pinniped species in Alaska, including the Steller sea lion, Northern fur seal, ringed seal, bearded seal, spotted seal, ribbon

seal, and harbor seal. Two of these pinnipeds are currently listed under the Endangered Species Act: the endangered western Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of Steller sea lions and the threatened Arctic subspecies of ringed seals (a third species, the Beringia DPS of bearded seals, was also listed as threatened but the listing was vacated by the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska). NMFS has the responsibility to foster the recovery of these ESA-listed species and research is necessary to support our recovery programs for these species. Non-ESA-listed pinniped species or populations in Alaska are listed as strategic stocks under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and/or are important as a subsistence resource to Alaska Natives and co-managed by NMFS and Alaska Native co-management partners. Research is also an important component to co-management of these animals.

Beginning in fiscal year (hereinafter, “FY”) 2015, certain priority pinniped research in Alaska has been administered through a competitively-funded, merit-based grants program. This program concerns only Alaskan pinnipeds for which NMFS bears responsibility; proposals focusing on marine mammals under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will not be considered for funding under this grant program. This document describes how to prepare and submit proposals for funding in FY 2016 and how NMFS will determine which proposals will be funded.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

## A. Program Objective

The objective of the FY16 Alaska Pinniped Research Program is to provide financial assistance for the development and implementation of research programs that:

- \* Support effective conservation and management of seals, sea lions, and Northern fur seals in Alaska; and
- \* Implement high priority research objectives or answer research needs as specified in NMFS recovery plans, conservations plans, research plans (including those developed with Alaska Native co-management organizations), or post-delisting monitoring plans for these species (available at <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/>).

## B. Program Priorities

Applicants should ensure that their applications address at least one of the following priorities, which are listed in no particular order of preference (i.e., no one factor carrying a higher priority than any other). Each project must list the priority or priorities being addressed. Proposed work may include field studies, captive studies, and/or laboratory and data analyses. Proposals will be more competitive if they make a clear and compelling case for how the proposed work will support NMFS management information needs, and demonstrate how the applicants will cooperate and coordinate with NMFS. Applications that do not address any of the program priorities will not be considered.

The pinniped research priorities for Fiscal Year 2016 are as follows:

1. Conduct studies of the western DPS of Steller sea lions to help elucidate its failure to recover, especially in the western and parts of the central Aleutian Islands. These studies should further understanding of threats to this DPS; spatial patterns in age-specific survival and reproduction; seasonal and age-specific patterns of prey consumption and habitat use; and the influence of direct and indirect effects of fisheries, disease, and contaminants.
2. Monitor the eastern DPS of Steller sea lions to detect temporal or spatial changes in trends in pup production, adult/juvenile (non-pup) counts, and survival and birth rates and to assess residual or emerging threats to the population. Projects must document the current genetic makeup of Steller sea lions at rookeries and other habitats that may be used by both eastern and western DPS animals to assess relative usage by each stock.

3. Quantify the contribution of environmental variation to the survival or productivity of northern fur seals breeding on the Pribilof Islands.
4. Determine the extent of exposure of Northern fur seals to infectious disease and human-derived contaminants, and their resulting effects on reproduction and survival.
5. Investigate the health and status of ringed and/or bearded seals, including behavioral and demographic responses to changes in sea ice, on-ice snow cover, and other associated environmental parameters.

NOAA will consider only applications that address the priorities identified in this section. All proposed projects should also be clearly linked to specific NMFS recovery plans, conservation plans, research plans (including those developed with Alaska Native co-management organizations), or post-delisting monitoring plans for these species.

#### C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. § 1380

## II. Award Information

#### A. Funding Availability

Total funding available under this notice is anticipated to be approximately \$3,500,000. Actual funding for this program is contingent upon FY2016 Federal appropriations. Award amounts will be determined by the content of the proposals and the availability of funds. Applicants are hereby given notice that these funds have not yet been appropriated for this program. Given this, there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards to all deserving projects. Publication of this notice does not obligate NOAA to make an award to any specific project or to obligate any funding. If an application is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding beyond the award period.

Funding for subsequent years of work during the award period will depend on the availability of Congressional appropriations and satisfactory performance as determined by the Federal Program Officer. If an applicant incurs any costs prior to receiving an award agreement signed by an authorized NOAA official, the applicant would do so solely at his/her own risk of these costs not being included under the award. Pre-award costs are not allowed under the award unless approved by the NOAA Grants Officer in accordance with 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.308(d) and 200.458.

## B. Project/Award Period

Project periods may extend up to a maximum of three years. For multi-year proposals, applicants must include a separate Project Narrative and Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative for each year of the project. Multi-year projects may be funded in one-year or greater increments depending on available funds and terms of the award. In either case, multi-year awards do not compete for funding in subsequent budget periods within the approved award period. Rather, any funding required for subsequent years is added to the multi-year award provided that the recipient has performed satisfactorily and that funding to support continuation of the project is available.

If a recipient wishes to continue work on a funded project beyond the project period because funding was not completely expended during the award term, the recipient can notify the assigned Federal Program Officer no later than 30 days prior to the end of the award period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension. If, however, funding is exhausted while work is left to be done on the project, the recipient should submit another proposal during the next competitive award cycle when and if it is announced (e.g. FY 2017) or seek an alternate source of funding. The requested award start date must begin on the first day of the month and end on the last day of the month.

## C. Type of Funding Instrument

Proposals selected for funding will be funded through a grant or a cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements are awards that include substantial involvement by NOAA in the management of the project. Examples of substantial involvement may include, but are not limited to, assisting in the development of outreach materials; collaboration between NOAA scientists and a recipient scientist; input into organizational structure, mode of operations, and programmatic activities; review and revision of draft deliverables; regularly scheduled monitoring; and/or operational involvement during performance. The exact amount of funds, the scope of work, and terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the successful applicant and NOAA representatives.

# III. Eligibility Information

## A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are individuals (U.S. citizens), institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, state, local, and Indian tribal governments. Federal agencies or instrumentalities are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. Eligible applicants must be in "good standing" with NMFS. An applicant is considered to be

in "good standing" if the entity meets the following criteria:

- 1) No pending enforcement actions under the MMPA or ESA.
- 2) Progress and financial reports on current Federal assistance awards are up-to- date and/or completed in a timely manner.
- 3) Satisfactory past performance. This includes completion of proposed projects in a timely manner or as stated in previous proposals. Unsatisfactory performance under prior or current Federal awards, including delinquency in submitting progress and financial reports and inability in meeting proposal objectives and tasks within the project period, may result in proposals not being considered for funding or affect the final funding recommendation under the 2016 Alaska Pinniped Research Program.

**B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement**

No cost sharing or matching is required under this program.

**C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility**

Applicants proposing research on species under cooperative management, or within Alaska Native communities or traditional hunting areas, must submit a plan of cooperation along with their application describing their efforts to inform, communicate, involve, and report their research to those communities and applicable co-management organizations.

**IV. Application and Submission Information**

**A. Address to Request Application Package**

Application packages are available through the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. Delays may be experienced when registering with Grants.gov near the end of a solicitation period. Therefore, NMFS strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline to begin the registration/application process through the Grants.gov website.

**B. Content and Form of Application**

NOAA employees (whether full-time, part-time, or intermittent) are not permitted to assist in the preparation of an application, except that staff may provide information on program goals, funding priorities, application procedures, completion of application forms, and collaboration and coordination of research undertaken by NOAA so as to avoid duplication of effort or to enhance a proposed project. Since this is a competitive program,

NOAA employees will not write letters of support for a proposal. Letters from NOAA describing collaboration on a proposed project are allowed (e.g., the use of NOAA samples or data by an applicant).

Applications must adhere to the requirements under the Applications and Required Elements subsections and must be submitted by the listed application deadline. Failure to follow these provisions will result in proposals being rejected and returned to the applicant without review.

## 1. Applications

A complete standard NOAA grant application package must be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. These forms are available through the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. Each application must include:

- Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424
- Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs: SF-424A
- Assurances - Non-Construction Programs: SF-424B
- Certification Regarding Lobbying: CD-511
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)
- Title Page (described below)
- Project Summary (described below)
- Project Narrative (described below)
- Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative (described below)
- Other supporting Documentation and Relevant Attachments the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project.

## 2. Required Elements

### A. Title Page (One page limit)

This page shall provide the project title, project duration, applicant name(s), name(s) of the Principal Investigator and any Co-Investigators, complete contact information (address, telephone, fax, email, and phone number) of the applicant(s), and a statement regarding the Federal, non-Federal, and total costs of the project.

### B. Project Summary (Two page limit)

Provide a brief summary of the project goals and objectives, the proposed activities and connection to specific funding priority being identified, the geographic area where the project would occur, and expected outcomes and benefits of the proposed activities. This



summary may be posted on NOAA's website if the project is funded.

#### C. Project Narrative (25 page limit)

Each project must be completely and accurately described. Multi-year proposals must include a separate Project Narrative for each year of the proposed project period. The Project Narrative must present a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and must include specific objectives and performance measures for the period of the proposed work. The manner in which these objectives and measures relate to longer longer-term goals of the PI's project or to other work planned, anticipated, or underway through Federal assistance should also be included. The project narrative must clearly state how the work will be undertaken to meet the program priorities and must include:

(1) Project Design: Project design describes specific work, activities, procedures, statistical design, or analytical methods that are being undertaken and what will be accomplished during each budget period of the project. Applications should be accomplishment-oriented and identify specific performance measures. Performance measurement is the process of assessing progress toward achieving predetermined goals, including efficiency, quality, outcomes and effectiveness. Performance management involves setting agreed-upon performance goals, allocating and prioritizing resources, informing managers about the effectiveness of meeting goals and reporting success. Project performance measures could be due dates for draft and final technical and scientific publications, dates for field seasons/data collection, or administrative such as meeting agendas or minutes, website updating, or outreach and education materials. Milestones should also be listed describing the specific activities and associated time lines to conduct the scope of work. Describe the time lines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2), rather than by specific dates, and include the major products and how will project results be disseminated. A Data/Information Sharing Plan (described later in this announcement) should be included (can be submitted as an appendix.)

(2) Goals and Objectives: Identify the specific program priority the project intends to address and describe its significance. Identify the problem/opportunity to be addressed and describe its significance. State what you expect the project to accomplish. Research objectives should be clear and understandable; as specific and quantitative as possible; clear as to the "what and when;" and attainable within the time, funding, and resources available. Administrative objectives should be described in a similar fashion.

(3) Project Management: Describe how the project will be organized and managed and who will be responsible for carrying out research or administrative activities. The lead organization/individual and person listed as the technical contact should be identified as the

Principal Investigator (PI). Use of sub-contractors or volunteer staff time to complete project activities and oversight of those individuals should be discussed. The PI is responsible for all technical oversight and implementation of the approved work plan as delineated in the proposal. One PI must be designated on each project, but the PI may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the PI, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and PI (e.g., applicant will be responsible for managing the grant funds and the PI will be responsible for completing the project milestones on time and within budget, etc.). Project participants or organizations that will have a significant role in conducting the project should be listed as Co-investigators. Organizations or individuals that support the project, for example, researchers contributing data or materials, should be referred to as Cooperators. Copies of the PI's and all Co-investigator's current resumes or curricula vitae must be included as appendices.

If any portion of the project will be conducted through consultants, subcontracts and/or sub-awards, applicants must follow the requirements set out at 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.330 through 200.332, as applicable. If a consultant, subcontractor and/or sub-awardee is selected prior to submitting an application, applicants must describe the process used for selection and provide a statement of his/her qualifications or background.

(4) Need for Government financial assistance: Demonstrate the need for government financial assistance. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.

(5) Participation by persons or groups other than the applicant: Describe how government and non-government entities, will participate in the project, and the nature of their participation.

(6) Federal, State and local government activities: List any plans or activities (Federal, State, or local government activities) this project would affect and describe the relationship between the proposed project and those plans or activities. Describe any coordination with other agency programs or on-going research efforts. Describe any other proposals or outside activities that are essential to the success of this proposal.

(7) Permitting: Provide a list of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work and an indication of the status of any permits needed, or a statement indicating that no permits are necessary.

#### D. Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative

Applications should include both a Budget Narrative and Detailed Budget. Both documents should provide a breakdown of total project costs by cost category, e.g. personnel/salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment (over \$5000/item), supplies (under \$5000/item), contractual costs, and indirect costs, with appropriate detail, explanation, and justification. Total project costs are the amount of funds required to accomplish what is proposed in the Project Narrative. The Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative should match the amounts on the SF-424 and SF-424A forms. Additional cost detail may be required prior to a final analysis of overall cost allowability, allocability, and reasonableness.

Budget Narrative detail should be broken down by sub-project and should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs associated by task/project as well as contractual hours and costs by task/project. Funds for salaries and benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific projects or outcomes of the proposed project. Hourly rates and projects hours worked on the project and/or percentage of time and yearly salary should be included for all salary requests. Applicants are strongly encouraged to request reasonable amount of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure the proposal is competitive. The Budget Narrative provides this cost information in a narrative format.

In addition to a Budget Narrative, a Detailed Budget should be provided on a separate sheet or spreadsheet, showing itemized costs per category and the corresponding Federal and non-Federal share and direct and indirect cost totals. For the non-Federal share, if any, the itemized costs should be separated into cash and in-kind contributions. If in-kind contributions are included, describe briefly the basis for estimating the value of these contributions. Non-Federal share is not required.

For multi-year proposals, a separate Detailed Budget and a Budget Narrative are required for each year of the proposed project period.

If the applicant currently has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government, indirect costs, which are sometimes referred to as facilities and administrative (F&A) costs, can be included in the budget. As defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.65, indirect costs are those costs incurred for common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. Indirect costs may include costs for basic operational functions, including lights, water, and insurance. If indirect costs are included, the application must include a copy of the current, approved, negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), if an

applicant has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, s/he may choose to negotiate a rate with the Department of Commerce or use the de minimis indirect cost rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). The negotiation and approval of a rate is subject to the procedures required by NOAA and the Department of Commerce Standard Terms and Conditions Section B.06. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer  
NOAA Grants Management Division  
1325 East West Highway  
9th Floor  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
lamar.revis@noaa.gov

NOAA/NMFS will not consider fees, fundraising activities, or travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. A project begins on the effective date of an award agreement between the applicant and the Grants Officer and ends on the date specified in the award. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award.

#### E. Appendices or Supporting Documentation

This section should include the supporting documentation such as: qualifications (i.e., curricula vitae or resumes) of the primary project personnel (PI and any Co-Investigators), agreements with key partners, a copy of established indirect cost rate agreement, letters of support received from relevant representatives, partners, or communities supporting the project, and letters of cooperation between the Principal Investigator and all named participants in the project, describing and agreeing to the specific activities each participant would perform (e.g., participants/collaborators receiving marine mammal samples/specimens). Applicants requiring scientific research permits must also include evidence of such a permit (i.e., the permit number) or evidence they have submitted a permit application. Additional material, documents and information necessary or useful to the description of the project will help us to understand the project and the priority you seek to address. Letters of support and/or cooperation are strongly recommended. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (described below) should also be attached as an appendix.

### C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications/proposals must be received and validated by Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m., AST, January 8, 2016. Applications/proposals received after the established deadline will be rejected and returned to the sender without consideration.

### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>. This information will assist applicants in providing either a Yes or No response to Item 16 of the Application Form, SF-424, entitled "Application for Federal Assistance."

### E. Funding Restrictions

No Funding Restrictions

### F. Other Submission Requirements

Permits, Pre-approvals, and Clearances: The applicant is required to obtain the necessary permits, approvals and/or clearances that authorize the actions and activities required to carry out the project as proposed. This shall include meeting the requirements of applicable Federal law and all local regulations. To ensure that such permits, approvals, and clearances, where required, are obtained prior to the release of funds to the recipient, specific requirements in the form of Special Award Conditions may be attached to the NOAA award documents. When requested, the applicant must also be available to respond to questions during all phases of review and evaluation of applications.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

Technical/Merit reviewers will evaluate applications by assigning scores based on the following standard evaluation criteria, associated questions, and respective weights specified below. Written comments are required to justify provided scores in each section of the review. Applications that best address these criteria and associated questions will be most competitive.

1. Importance/ relevance and applicability of proposal to the program objectives and priorities (30 points): Proposals will be evaluated on clear identification of proposed project objectives and the applicant's ability to link those objectives the objectives and priorities of this program. Reviewers will carefully consider the likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results specified in the Project Narrative.
2. Technical/scientific merit (20 points): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the research methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project objectives. Are the objectives in the proposal clearly defined and focused? Does the applicant demonstrate that the objectives are realistic and can be reached within the proposed project period? Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider ways to resolve the issues or implement alternative tactics? Is sufficient detail provided in the proposal about the methods proposed for monitoring and evaluating the success of the project?
3. Overall qualifications of the applicant (20 points): This criterion assesses whether the applicant and team members possess the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will consider previous related experience and qualifications of the project's PI, or Co-Investigator(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors, consultants, and cooperators. Reviewers will also consider past award performance of the applicant(s) and PI. Does the applicant have adequate administrative capability and experience in successfully completing similar projects? Does the applicant provide position descriptions of staff being funded through the proposal? Does the proposal include resumes and/or curricula vitae of the PI or staff funded through the proposal?
4. Project costs (30 points): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be justified, clear to the reviewer, cost-effective, and appropriately allocated. Applicant should include the organization's travel policy and rates. The proposed costs and overall budget of the project will be evaluated according to the proposed work. Note project costs including administrative costs must be limited to NMFS species. Other cost-related evaluation is based on the following questions: Is the budget cost-effective and realistic based on the applicant's stated objectives, time frame, and amount of overall project budget? Is the proposed budget sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification of costs by object class? Are requested funds for salaries and fringe benefits only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project

and/or directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project?

#### B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in three steps: initial screening, technical/merit panel review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (i.e., the Regional Administrator, NMFS Alaska Region). An initial screening and evaluation of applications will be conducted to ensure that application packages have all required forms and application elements, clearly relate to the 2016 Alaska Pinniped Research Program, and meet all of the eligibility criteria.

NMFS will screen applications to ensure that they were received by the deadline date (see IV.C. Submission Dates and Times); include a SF 424 authenticated by an authorized representative, as well as other required federal forms; were submitted by an eligible applicant; address one of the funding priorities; include a budget, statement of work, and milestones; and identify the principal investigator. If the application does not conform to the requirements listed above and/or the deadline date for submission has passed, the application will be returned without further consideration.

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will then undergo technical/merit panel review. Each application will be examined by reviewers that evaluate and discuss the application in a panel setting, followed by an individual scoring using the evaluation criteria provided in section V.A. (Evaluation Criteria) above. Technical/merit reviewers will be individuals with appropriate subject-matter expertise and may be from Federal or state agencies, or other organizations. The merit reviewers' scores will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. The identity of individual reviewers will remain anonymous to the extent permitted by law.

After applications have undergone merit review, the Selecting Official will make the final decision regarding funding based upon the rankings, funding recommendations, and evaluations of the applications. If the Selecting Official accepts an application for a project not in accordance with the rank given or the recommendation of the reviewer panel, the Selecting Official will consult with the Federal Program Officer and provide a detailed written explanation of the reasons for the action based on the selection factors below. The authority for approving a grant award for projects rests solely with NOAA.

Not all activities, tasks, objectives or projects submitted under a single proposal may be deemed appropriate for funding; as such, the Selecting Official may recommend alternate activities as appropriate. For an application to be selected for funding, the applicant may be required to modify objectives, work plans, budgets, and provide supplemental information

required by the agency prior to award.

We will notify you in writing whether your application is selected or not. Successful applications will be incorporated into the grant/cooperative agreement award documentation. (See VI. Award Administration Information, A. Award Notices)

### C. Selection Factors

The NMFS Regional Administrator, Alaska Region will be the Selecting Official. The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Selecting Official will review the rank order, funding recommendations and comments from all reviewers and determine the recipients to be funded and how much funding shall be awarded to each selected recipient. A program officer may first make recommendations to the Selecting Official after applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding
  2. Balance/distribution of funds:
    - (a) geographically,
    - (b) type of institutions,
    - (c) type of partners,
    - (d) research areas, and
    - (e) project types.
  3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/ Federal agencies.
  4. Program priorities and policy factors.
  5. Applicant's prior/current award performance (including progress and financial reporting, and ability to meet proposed objectives and tasks within project period in a timely manner).
  6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups.
- Key program policy factors (see 4 above) to be considered by the Selecting Official are:
- (1) The time of year the research activities are to be conducted;
  - (2) The ability of the proposal to meet the applicable requirements;



(3) Redundancy of research projects.

Therefore, the highest scoring projects may not necessarily be selected for an award.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, the competitive selection process (including notification of successful applications) is expected to be completed four months from the date of posting of this Federal funding opportunity announcement.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification from the NFMS Alaska Region Program Office that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin project operations, and is not a guarantee of funding. Official notification of selection, signed by the NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows a project to begin. This notification will be issued by e-mail from Grants Online to the Authorized Representative of the project. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposals were not selected for recommendation and will receive copies of their technical review scores and comments. If an application is not selected, NOAA will return the proposal and related documents to the applicant.

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and NOAA/NMFS program staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until an official notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Officer.

Award documents provided by the Grants Officer may contain special award conditions for activities outlined within the proposal. These special award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award as applicable and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award so they are fully aware of the relevant Standard Terms and Conditions as well as any Special Award Conditions that have been placed on the award. To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available

to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS number) and be subject to reporting requirements as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 C.F.R. Parts 25, 170 (2010)

[http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl),  
[http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl).

## B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390) are applicable to this solicitation and may be accessed online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf>. Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact should furnish information requested to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

## 2. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA ).

If recommended for funding, applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact will be asked to furnish sufficient information to assist NOAA in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project. NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for each project which seeks NOAA funding. Detailed information on NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA web site: [www.nepa.noaa.gov](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov), including our NOAA Administrative order 216-6 for NEPA, [www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216\\_6.pdf](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, [https://ceq.doe.gov/ceq\\_regulations/regulations.html](https://ceq.doe.gov/ceq_regulations/regulations.html). If needed by NOAA for NEPA assessment, applicants will be asked to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species, and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment if NOAA determines an assessment is required.

Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental.

### 3. Unpaid or Delinquent Tax Liability:

In accordance with current Federal appropriations law, NOAA will provide a successful corporate applicant a form to be completed by its authorized representatives certifying that the corporation has no Federally-assessed unpaid or delinquent tax liability or recent felony criminal convictions under any federal law.

### C. Reporting

All performance and financial reports shall be submitted through the recipient's NOAA Grants Online account in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress on each award is communicated to NOAA in the form of performance progress reports, the requirements of which are outlined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.301.

#### Financial and Performance (technical reports)

Recipients will be required to submit the following financial and performance (technical) reports. These reports must be submitted electronically through the Grants Online system:

1. Financial Status Reports (SF-425) are required to be submitted to the Grants Officer semi-annually, or as outlined in the award conditions. Financial Status Reports must be entered directly into the Grants Online system.
2. Semi-Annual performance reports will be required to address progress and performance in six-month intervals, beginning from the award start date. Reports are due no later than 30 days following the end of each reporting period.  
The format of the semi-annual performance report may vary, but must contain:
  - a. A brief description of the program/research purpose and/or underlying need for the work. Include enough detail to acquaint the reader with the project specifics without having to reread proposal;
  - b. A summary of progress and results - State each project objective scheduled for the

reporting period. For each project objective, describe each of the tasks planned to complete the objective. Describe activities undertaken to achieve each of the planned tasks. Please provide a separate response for each task. If there were changes to the project objectives or tasks during the reporting period, detail the circumstance and nature of each change. Describe results and/or specific products (e.g., publications, data, technology, web site updates) prepared during the reporting period. Attach copies of publications or research products completed during the period.

c. Identification of any problems or issues - Explain circumstances or problems that prevented completion of any one or more of the project objectives or tasks. Please provide a separate response for each objective or task not completed. Describe what actions will be taken to resolve the above problem(s) for each project objective or task not completed. Please provide a separate response for each objective or task. Explain any significant differences between budgeted and actual expenditures and/or line item transfers.

3. A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products that are developed under the award. Copies of all materials (such as but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, workshop proceedings etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be submitted within 90 days of the end of the award. All such products should acknowledge the support provided by the NOAA/NMFS Alaska Region, 2016 Alaska Pinniped Research Program.

The format of the final comprehensive report may vary, but must contain:

- a. A brief summary of overall project purpose, key activities and results;
- b. A detailed description of the issue/problem that was addressed. Describe specific goals/objectives of the project/program;
- c. A detailed description of how work was undertaken to accomplish project objectives i.e., sampling protocol, data collection methods, analytical methods.
- d. A description of project results and/or findings, including a discussion of extent to which the goals and objectives were achieved. Specifically detail which objectives were achieved, partially achieved, and which were not achieved. For the objectives partially or not met, describe the circumstances preventing successful completion of the objective;
- e. A description of significant modifications made to the original goals/objectives and why the change was necessary;
- f. A discussion of results and any relevant conclusions presented in a format that is understandable to a non-technical audience. This should include benefits and/or contributions to management decision-making;
- g. A list of entities, firms, or organizations that actually performed the work, and a

description of how the work was accomplished;

h. Data from research projects must be submitted in electronic format with appropriate documentation to NMFS as requested; and

i. A description of products/publications (journal articles, pamphlets, videos, etc.) prepared during the project period. Provide copy of publication or title pages of grant funded products with sufficient information (author, title, publisher, etc.) to facilitate cataloguing or information sharing, as soon as they are available. Describe activities undertaken to disseminate project results/publications/product.

4. Publications, Videos, and Acknowledgement of Sponsorship: Publication of the results or findings of the funded award activities in appropriate professional journals, outreach materials, or press releases, and production of video or other media is encouraged as an important method of recording and reporting scientific information. These are also constructive means to expand access to federally funded research. The recipient is required to submit a copy of any publication to the funding agency, and when releasing information related to a funded project, include a statement that the project or effort undertaken was or is sponsored by NOAA Fisheries Service. The recipient is also responsible for assuring that every publication of material (including Internet sites and videos) based on or developed under an award, except scientific articles or papers appearing in scientific, technical or professional journals, contains the following acknowledgement and disclaimer: "This project received funding under award [number] from NOAA Fisheries Service, in cooperation with the Alaska Pinniped Research Program. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA Fisheries.";

5. Citation of literature references.

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier subawards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all subawards over \$25,000.

## VII. Agency Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this solicitation, please contact Shawn P. Carey, at the Alaska Regional Office, 709 9th Street, Juneau Alaska 99801; Phone: (907) 586-7845; or

Email: shawn.carey@noaa.gov.

## VIII. Other Information

A. In the event that an application contains information or data that you do not want disclosed prior to award for purposes other than the evaluation of the application, you should mark each page containing such information or data with the words "Privileged, Confidential, Commercial, or Financial Information - Limited Use" at the top of the page to assist NOAA in making disclosure determinations. DOC regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are found at 5 U.S.C 552, which sets forth rules for DOC to make requested materials, information, and records publicly available under FOIA. The contents of funded applications may be subject to requests for release under the FOIA. Based on the information provided by you, the confidentiality of the content of funded applications will be maintained to the maximum extent permitted by law.

### B. Data/Information Sharing Plan

A Data/Information Sharing Plan should be submitted as an appendix. Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

1. Unless otherwise noted in this federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 -- Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to the Mission Goals.
2. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.
3. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA

when making future award decisions.